

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15915

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AR, VT

SUBJECT: CHURCH STATE RELATIONS

1. AMBASSADOR RUBEN VICTOR MANUEL BLANCO PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS TO POPE PAUL VI SEPTEMBER 27. THE NEW ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE WAS BORN JULY 21, 1916, IS A LAWYER BY PROFESSION AND HAS BEEN A DEPUTY AND SENATOR. HE REPLACES AMBASSADOR RICARDO GUARDO WHO DEPARTED ROME JANUARY 22, 1976 TO ACCEPT APPOINTMENT FROM PRESIDENT PERON AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

2. THE FORMAL REMARKS EXCHANGED DURING THE CREDENTIALS CEREMONY WERE SIGNIFICANT IN THAT THEY DID NOT HIDE THE EXISTING STRAINS IN STATE-CHURCH RELATIONS IN ARGENTINA.

3. THE POPE IN HIS PREPARED REMARKS: (A) STATED THAT "AN ADEQUATE EXPLANATION" IS STILL LACKING REGARDING THE LOSS OF HUMAN LIVES, INCLUDING THOSE OF SEVERAL CHURCHMEN; (B) DEPLORED THE "BLIND VIOLENCE" PREVAILING IN ARGENTINA; AND (C) EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES WILL ENGAGE IN PROGRAMS BASED
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ON JUSTICE AND RESPECT FOR BASIC PERSONAL RIGHTS.

4. THE NEW AMBASSADOR, AFTER NOTING THAT THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVE WAS ESTABLISHMENT OF "CLIMATE OF INTERNAL PEACE," REFERRED TO THE MANY OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND CITED SPECIFICALLY "VIOLENCE WHICH IS IDEALOGICAALLY NURTURED" AND WHOSE OBJECTIVES ARE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE RIGHTS AND VALUES OF ARGENTINE NATION. THIS SITUATION, THE AMBASSADOR SAID, " IS HAPPILY ON WAY TO BEING OVERCOME."

5. COMMENT: POPE'S UNUSUALLY DIRECT LANGUAGE TO THE NEW ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR IS ANOTHER SIGNAL IN AN EVOLVING POLICY OF OPPOSITION TO LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY REGINES WHICH VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING THOSE OF ARGENTINA AND CHILE, FROM RECENT ARTICLES IN THE VATICAN ORGANS L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO AND RADIO VATICAN AND FROM PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH VATICAN OFFICIALS ONE GETS STRONG INDICATIONS THAT VATICAN IS ENCOURAGING CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA TO ALIGN ITSELF MORE CLOSELY WITH OPPRESSED SOCIAL FORCES AND TO SPEAK OUT MORE VIGOROUSLY AGAINST INJUSTICES AND SOCIAL ILLS AND IN DEFENSE OF POLITICAL FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS.VOLPE

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